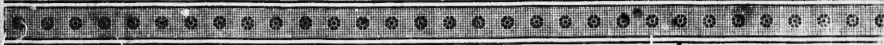
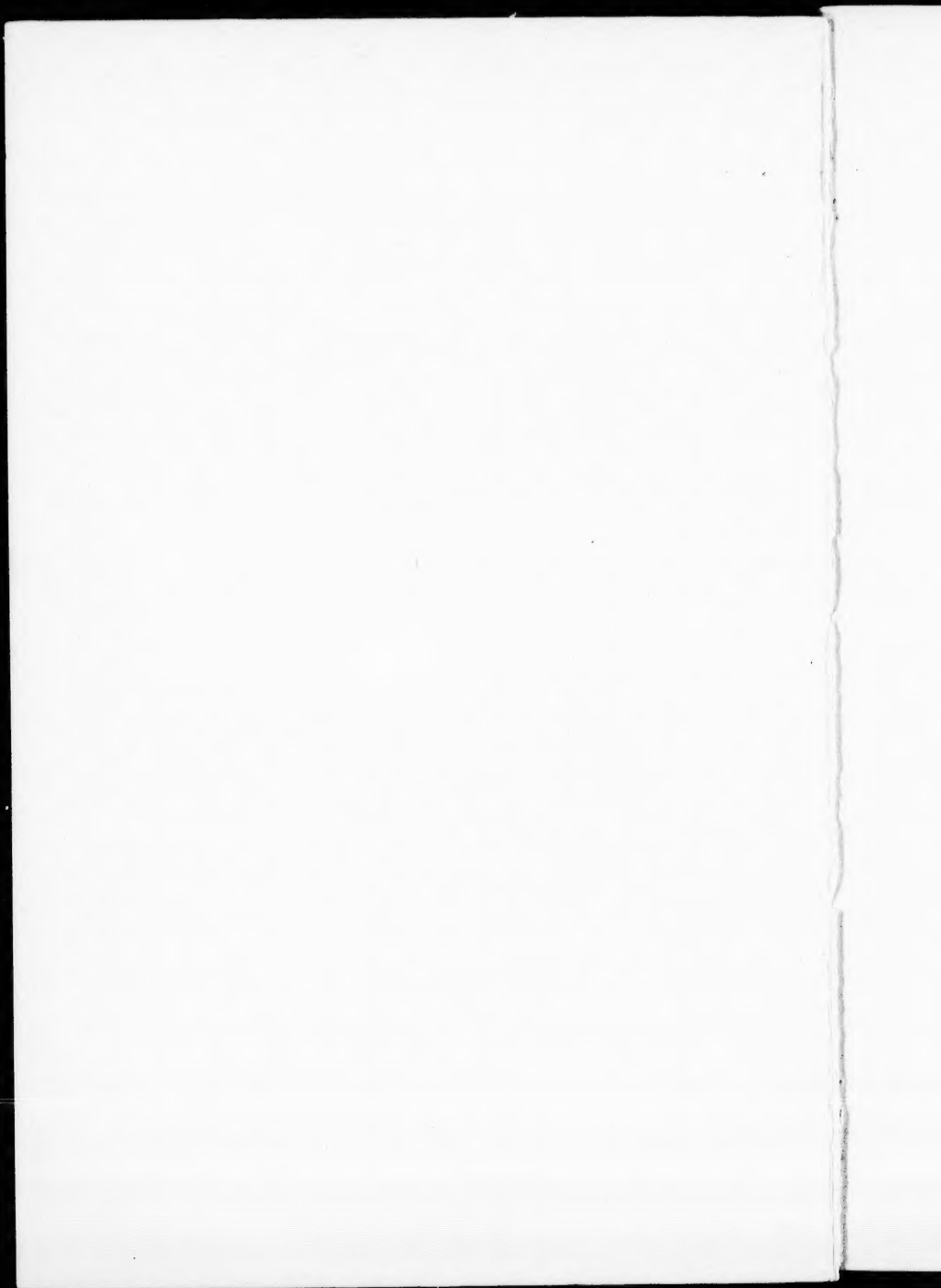




In Memoriam.





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SERMON

BY THE LATE ALBERT KINNEAR.

"He being dead yet speaketh."

AUGUST 29th, 1896

HALIFAX :
NOVA SCOTIA PRINTING COMPANY, SACKVILLE STREET.
1896.

SERMON.

LUKE 23 : 31.—“ For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? ”

The most solemn part of each day is its close. With the fading twilight and growing gloom of evening a hush falls upon the spirit. We listen to the dying murmurs of the wind and watch the rising stars, and are silenced and subdued. Our life is but a day. Birth is the sunrise, death the sunset. It is a solemn thing to live ; it is a solemn thing to die ; of the two, to die is the more solemn. Dying is the ebb of time, it is the flow of eternity. It is even a solemn thing to speak. Our words are lost yet treasured. Every word dropped by us is caught by God. The lightest word we utter is imperishable. We cannot unsay it, God cannot forget it. Of all our words the most solemn are our dying words. They are the last earthly sighs of the suffering, the last earthly songs of the rejoicing. The last word we speak is the amen of our mortality. All Christ's words were solemn, but as the light of His short stormy life sank into eternity, His words became fewer and deeper-toned. Such are the words of my text. Heard aright, they sound as an awful prelude to the great judgment sentence—“ Depart from me ye cursed.”

Behold Christ on His way to Calvary ! His hour has come. He carries the cross on which he is to die.

The Jews and Romans are taking Him to the place of crucifixion. A multitude of women, weeping and lamenting, follow the innocent sufferer. He turns to them and says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." While they were pitying Him, He was pitying them. And in truth they were the real objects of pity. They saw only the shame and sorrow of His death,—He felt the glory that would follow. They thought Him bound by the will of others,—He felt Himself bound by His own will. They beheld Him in the hands of his murderers,—He felt Himself in the hands of His Father. They looked at the present,—He looked beyond at the future. "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." They weep at the sight of His judgment, but He bids them weep at the thought of their own. For Christ points out two great judgments coming upon them, the latter greater than the former. The future is darkened by the smoke of two fearful conflagrations: the one the fire of Jerusalem; the other the burning of the world. He further tells them when men feel the heat of God's vengeance they shall change their minds; some things they call blessings now, they shall call curses then. Now, they long for children and cling to life; then, they shall envy the childless and the dead. And He closes the whole narrative with one of the most solemn sayings the Son of Man ever uttered:—"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The green tree is Christ, the dry tree is the Jewish nation. The first judgment was to fall upon the Jewish people, and the last judgment will come upon the unconverted world.

We are not to think of the "green tree" as a young and tender tree, but rather one full-grown and flourishing.

By the "dry" He means a tree withered, worthless, and dead. With respect to the first judgment, Christ may infer that if the Romans so treat Him, the Innocent, how will they treat guilty Jerusalem? Or He may imply, if the Jews so punish me, how will God punish them? As respecting the second judgment, He surely means, if God so bruise the innocent for the transgressions of others, how will He punish the guilty for their own iniquities? We have presented to us two trees; the one green, the other, dry. I will show you, firstly, the glory and destruction of the green tree, and secondly, the shame and end of the dry tree:—

I. The glory and destruction of the green tree. In meditating upon the glory of the green tree, we had better keep the tree and its shadow apart. To do this we will look first at the natural tree, and second, what is represented by it.

In the midst of yonder wilderness, overrun with all manner of trees and plants, there lies an humble patch of dry bare ground. From that ground, where nothing ever grew before, there springs up a young tree, tall and fair to look upon. Higher and higher it grows, till its shadow falls on the tips of the loftiest trees around it; higher and still higher, until all the trees in the forest are small when compared with it. Now turn to the reality. Christ is that tree of God. At His birth He was a shoot out of a dry ground. In His infancy He grew a "tender plant," to use the

prophet Isaiah's words. In his childhood His shadow fell upon heads that were gray with age and experience, and in His manhood, the mightiest in the world were far below, under His branches. As a man He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, so that there was not such another upon the face of the earth. He stood alone, the great Tree of Life, in the midst of the perishing, bidding fair to stretch forth His branches to the uttermost ends of the world.

Look again at the green tree. How beautiful it is ! It has no crooked boughs, no twisted branches. There are no worm-eaten or withered leaves : every leaf is as fresh as when first unfolded from the bud. No bitter or rotten fruits. All its fruit is ripe and unimpaired. From the lowest root to the highest leaf the tree is faultless. Behold in all this a faint picture of Jesus ! His birth was as pure as the creation of an angel ; His childhood was as spotless as sunshine, His thoughts as clear as the river of God ; His heart a well of sympathy and affection ; His soul a deep spring of love ; His life unstained by the shadow of evil. He was the wonder of devils, the admiration of angels, and the joy of God. His presence was heaven on earth.

Turn once again to the green tree. Mark its goodness. It casts a cool shade at noontide ; under its shadow the weary hide from the heat. The sick pluck its leaves and lay them on the sores and wounds, and they bring balm to the wounded and strength to the diseased. Its flowers shed down sweetness, its fruit is the daily bread of a multitude. The storms

that bow and break down the trees of the forest only shower from its bending branches leaves and fruit and fragrance upon the world beneath.

Behold in this the mission of Jesus! He was the refuge of the repentant, the rest of the weary, the home of the outcast. He was bread to the hungry and health to the diseased. Did the blind ever leave him sightless? or the hungry, empty? or the dumb, silent? Was He not more than the pool of Siloam to helpless sufferers? and than the waters of Jordan to leprous Naamans? Was he not the balm of Gilead to broken hearts? and the grave in which men buried their sorrows? When storms of trial and temptation swept across Him, what did they shake down but leaves of healing and the bread of life? What was He but the Tree of Life transplanted for a time from the everlasting Eden?

Take one more glance at the green tree. Mark its promise. Leave it untouched and what would it become? Will it not reach up to heaven, and spread till it overshadows the world? Whom will it leave without a shelter? What disease will it not cure? Will it not grow into a universal blessing? Behold the shadow of Jesus! Had he dwelt upon earth until now what would He not have done for mankind. If He freely forgave the sins of penitent publicans, and praying thieves, and weeping harlots, and cast out none who came to Him, how many now, if He walked this earth, would swell the train of His disciples?

When we think of it; how glorious was that green tree of God? Wonderful Jesus! How can we now turn from the brightness of Thy glory to the gloom of

Thy sorrow ? Who shall tell the tale of destruction ? The axe and the flame from beneath, and the glittering arrows from above, stripped, rent, and levelled, all Thy glory. Thou wast slain and buried from off the face of the earth. Come all you who are careless about your own salvation ; all you who are not in earnest about the salvation of others, come hither and tremble at Christ's sorrows. They are the blackest prophecies of future sorrows to the careless and unconverted that were ever written by the finger of God upon the page of history. Woe to the guilty in the day of vengeance ! See Him, the innocent Lamb of God, and all for the sins of others, led as a lamb to the slaughter. See Him, the humble, loving, devoted Jesus, the only, the everlasting Son of God, trodden down and crushed by the multitude ; scourged, stripped and crucified, forsaken of His Father. Hear the dying prayer, " My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? " That cry uttered, His heart breaks. Naught hangs upon the cross but a lifeless body. The sobbing soul, the breath of love and sorrow, the overburdened spirit, had gone through the fearful gloom to His God. Thus died in the presence of man and of God the Holy Son of Man and Son of God. Thus died by the hand of man and the will of God the faultless Son of Man and Son of God. Thus died for the good of man and the glory of God the atoning Son of Man and Son of God. And justice was satisfied.

II. The shame and end of the dry tree. Unconverted man or woman look at that dry tree. It is spring-time ; thousands of plants around are putting forth green leaves, but not a leaf appears upon it. It

is summer ; the gardens are colored with flowers, but it stands as bare as it stood in the spring. It is autumn ; the orchards are golden and red with fruit, but it remains black and dead.

Sinner, thou art that dry tree. Look back to your early years and think what you were,—ere ever the light of knowledge of good or evil dawned upon your new-born wondering mind, ere evil storms of passion overhung to darken or trouble it. How warm was your fresh tender heart towards your earthly parent, how cold towards your Heavenly Father? You wept sometimes from religious impressions, but were the tears which fell from your eyes true signs of the life of God in your soul? Do not those who are at enmity with God perchance weep over the sufferings of Christ? Have you not wept over the pathetic story of the cross? But was there any more real spiritual emotion in your tears than in the tears you shed over a broken toy, or a dead pet? Did your child-voice ever utter prayer, true prayer? Do the dead breathe? And when summer came and others of your age were blossoming in spiritual loveliness, did you brighten and break forth into the bloom of grace? Did you become humble and obedient and affectionate? Did your heart begin to swell and beat with a new and hidden life, sending the warm streams of joy and love through your entire being, until no longer able to contain yourself you broke forth into sweet confession of Christ and praise to God? Do the dead speak?

And when autumn came to you, and the souls of men you loved were ripening under the constant shining of God's face upon them, did your feelings

soften with a sense of the goodness of the Lord, and mellow into the tenderness of mature affection towards Him? Were you not still fruitless, aye, and dead? And now winter has come to some of you and your sun of life is sinking low. Soon shall you sink in the midnight storm, soon shall time cover your last resting-place with withered leaves and the ashes of mortality. Oh! miserable one, hast thou not within thee still the spirit of life, the earnest of immortality? Do cold hearts beat? No. Dead in spring-time, dead in summer, in autumn and winter. Thou hast remained unchanged by the light of experience, by the warnings of years, by the swift flight of seasons, by blighted hopes and gathering shadows. Thy past, lost; thy present, perishing; thy future, God only knows.

Look again unconverted man or woman at that dry tree. Never does the rising sun shine upon it, but it finds it more decayed than it was the day before. Branch after branch drops off as it slowly rots to the core. Sinner, thou art that dry tree. You are not more dead now than you were in childhood, but you are more corrupt. Then you were fresh dead, now you are long dead. You have exposed yourself to many things that have hastened your decay, harboured much that has bred decay. Once you had little knowledge of what was bad and people called you innocent. But your knowledge of evil increased, you became wise about men's open follies and learned about men's secret sins, while Satan's power over you increased. Your memory took on fresh stains every day, the good faded or was forgot-

ten; the evil gathered strength and remained. Your sins multiplied. Every sin makes the next sin easier, makes it blacker and the load heavier. The evil that once shocked you does not surprise you now; acts of sin once rare are now common. Evil deeds have grown into evil habits, passions indulged have strengthened while your feeble resolutions against iniquity are more irresolute. Your case is becoming more hopeless, for the gulf between you and heaven widens. Each hour swells the number of lost opportunities to repent. Unless God will have mercy on you very soon you will perish forever.

Look again unconverted man or woman at that dry tree. Lift up its bark and behold the things that crawl beneath it. Turn over the decaying log and see what venomous creatures lie there. It is a nest of deadly reptiles. Sinner, thou art that dry tree. There is one thing that lives in you, *i. e.* sin. Who can tell all that lies underneath the surface of your appearance. God, who knows what is in man, has spoken of him as a "cave" of uncleanness, a chamber of evil imaginations, a "sepulchre" of dark loathsome thoughts. Has God changed your heart? If not, these terms include you. Do you doubt it? Turn over the dark pages of man's history, read the record of man's pride, avarice, passion, cruelty and tell me where the evil has all come from? Recall the tales of lust and hate and villany and murder and tell me where the evil came from. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," &c. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Evil imaginations are there, blasphemous thoughts

are there, unclean desires and deadly passions are there. Look again at that dry tree. Mark the space it occupies. A living tree might grow upon the very spot where it stands, if it were only taken away. It defiles the place. The earth groans under the evil burden. It is a cumberer of the ground.

Sinner, thou art that dry tree. Multitudes of persons are blessings when they live. They know the world is perishing and they labor for its salvation. But men are no better for your presence upon the earth. You are no real good to them. You may do something for men's bodies, but you do nothing for their souls. You have not been an everlasting blessing to a single person. All your work will die with time and be forgotten in eternity. Thousands around you are fruitful trees in the garden of God bringing forth ripe faith, tender love, sweet hope and peace. God gathers their fruit in season and rewards them thirty, sixty and a hundred fold. But you are barren, without faith, love, peace, humility. You stand alike unmindful of God's commands and warnings, — a cumberer of the ground. But the evil is still worse. You take up the room which others might occupy with advantage. For example, suppose you are engaged in business, you have opportunities for serving God which you habitually neglect. If you were dead, some one else, with an eye fixed on the glory of God might take your place and do a mighty work in spreading abroad the knowledge of the Gospel among the perishing. But you occupy the room cumbering the ground. Or you are a parent and you have a garden to cultivate for God. But you

sat still while your children who should be trees of righteousness grew up poisonous plants. Evil overran your household. The daily worship of God was either a lifeless form or entirely neglected. Some of your family fade in death and you bury their dust not knowing whether or no their never-dying spirits have gone to God. Now if you were but dead another might lead these unhappy children to the throne of grace—might guide their footsteps in the way of truth. But you fill the place, a cumberer of the ground. And because it has long been calm with you, you fear no storm ; because life still lasts you forget death, because time continues you forget eternity. But look at that tree. Soon it will decay away. A few more years and you may seek it in vain. Sinner, thou art like that. Decay has set in. You are partly gone already, your pulse is coming to a stop. I think I see you dying. Your head lies heavily upon the pillow, your breathing is feverish and faint, your lips are dry : the shadow of death crosses your pale face. You are strangely still, you grow cold, you are dead. Wrapped in white you are lifted into the coffin, you are lowered into the grave and buried out of sight of all the world. The tears wept for you are wiped away. All who remembered you depart into eternity and the place knows you no more. Time wipes out your name from the gravestone. The trumpet sounds and you awake and stand before the bar of judgment. You are condemned. God curses you. The gates of darkness close upon you and you sink into blackness and torment. Eternity rolls on while the songs of the redeemed swell and echo around the

throne of God for ever. And you in agony are forgotten. You are lost. Is the picture awful. Then let this be your prayer—O Jesus, Son of the Most High God, have mercy on me a perishing sinner! Who among us can answer thine awful question—“What shall be done in the dry?” But O Lord, canst not thou who didst raise dry bones, quicken me? Speak to us as thou didst to the dead of old. Curse us not as Thou didst curse the barren tree, but bless us as Thou hast blessed thousands of poor penitents who knelt and wept before Thee in their misery, and as we are not damned, but spared, may we be now forgiven and finally saved, and we shall love, obey, praise and bless Thee forever and ever.

“Father, He cries, forgive their sins
For I myself have died;
And then He shows His open veins
And pleads His wounded side.”

Only believe and live forever.

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